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Author(s): Joseph Kestner

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JOSEPH KESTNER

Edward Burne-Jones and Nineteenth-Century Fear of Women

Women in Victorian painting constitute a range of figures typifying the social conscience, sentimentality, and anxiety of the period. Such images include the woman as guardian of hearth and home (Millais, *The Order of Release*, 1746, 1853), woman as suffering worker (Redgrave, *The Sempstress*, 1844), and woman as fallen victim (Hunt, *The Awakening Conscience*, 1853).¹ As the century advanced, these images could become more specialized, as in the presentation of the nun or the enchantress. Charles Collins' *Convent Thoughts* (1851) and Millais' *The Vale of Rest* (1859) represent one aspect of this direction. The threatening female appeared in such embodiments as Sandys' *Vivien* (1863).² If some of these images represent concern for the condition of women, others embody fears that were expressed socially, for example, in the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s or the exclusion of women from higher education.³ Graham Hough comments in *The Last Romantics* that these cultural phenomena were evident from mid-century:

Any full treatment of the culture of the period would have to explain the lavish and eccentric display of erotic symbolism that made its appearance on both sides of the Channel after the middle of the century—the obsession with various illicit alliances between love, pain, and death; the femme fatale or the vampire; homosexuality, male and female; hermaphroditism, and all the rest of it. No doubt some of the mythological embodiments of these states of mind, notably the conception of women as some sort of mysterious fatality, were . . . personifications of forces and ideas buried deep in the human psyche.⁴

Such tensions influenced both subject matter and exhibiting. Helene Roberts notes that “the Royal Academy accepted few paintings that threatened the precarious logic of laissez-faire or the carefully cultivated myth that dominance was the natural right of the male.”⁵

The sesquicentenary of the birth of Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898) provides an occasion to consider the artist’s place in this particular cultural predisposition of his time, the fear of women. Conventional reactions to Burne-Jones focus on his “distance” from his time, as in this observation by F. G. Stephens: “[He] in effect protests against the tendencies of an overwhelmingly ‘practical’ and demonstrative age.”⁶ To this distancing is added commentary about Burne-Jones’s “mystery.” On the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery, 1st May 1877, Henry James recorded that while Burne-Jones was “quite the lion of the exhibition,”

Mr. Burne-Jones’s lionship is owing partly to his ‘queerness’ and partly to a certain air of mystery which had long surrounded him. He had not exhibited in public for many years, and people had an impression that in private prosperity his genius was growing ‘queerer’ than ever.

“The fullness of their mystical meaning I do not profess to have fathomed” James confessed about the artist’s *The Days of Creation*.⁷ Later in the century Paul Leprieur spoke of a Burne-Jones canvas as a “strange and mysterious painting which intrigues and surprises, like an incomprehensible enigma.”⁸

Henry James’s “mystical meaning” and Leprieur’s “incomprehensible enigma” are not so elusive or remote as they may have supposed. James notes an aspect of the enigma in speaking of *The Days of Creation*:

I call them young women, but even this is talking a grosser prose than is proper in speaking of creatures so mysteriously poetic. Perhaps they are young men; they look indeed like beautiful, rather sickly boys. Or rather, they are sublimely sexless, and ready to assume whatever charm of manhood or maidenhood the imagination desires.⁹

James was not alone in noting the ambivalent sexuality of Burne-Jones’s figures. Justin McCarthy commented on a painting obviously by Burne-Jones:

Her lover is always singularly like herself . . . The hero and heroine are very much the same sort of thing. The hero has the high cheekbones, the gaunt face, the red hair; he is almost invariably beardless, and only for the dress I doubt whether you would know one from the other.¹⁰

Both James and McCarthy astutely detect certain distinguishing marks of a Burne-Jones canvas, such as exquisite coloration, shallow relief, and sinuous linearity. A final mark is the ambiguous sexuality of the figures. Graham Hough's belief that such figures represent "personifications of forces . . . deep in the human psyche" suggests a valuable direction of inquiry for studying Burne-Jones. Two sources provide information about "forces" that drove Burne-Jones to depict such figures: the painter's attitude towards women, with its expression in his sexual life; and the early influences that shaped his artistic choice of subjects. Rather than being removed from the nineteenth-century fear of women, Burne-Jones partakes of the pictorial tradition regarding women during the period. The tendency reflected by Sandys or Rossetti, of presenting the sinister woman, was part of his own direction. Burne-Jones's conception of women derived from three sources: his relationship with Rossetti as pupil and friend; his marriage to Georgiana Macdonald and his subsequent affair with Maria Zambaco; and his reaction to this affair in his work after 1870, particularly in the *Perseus* cycle. The fear of women that marked one dimension of the Victorian consciousness underlies the enigmatic figures of Burne-Jones.¹¹

I

Burne-Jones's relationship with Dante Gabriel Rossetti was decisive in forming two conceptions of women, the woman as epipsyche and the woman as siren. "There I first saw the name of Rossetti," Burne-Jones recalled, remembering the day William Morris showed him the edition of Ruskin's *Edinburgh Lectures* in 1854.¹² The following year Burne-Jones saw Rossetti's *Dante Drawing the Head of Beatrice* and his illustration to *The Maids of Elfenmere*, published in William Allingham's *Day and Night Songs*. The latter Burne-Jones praised in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* in 1856: "It is I think the most beautiful drawing for an illustration I have ever seen, the weird faces of the maids . . . are such as only a great artist could conceive."¹³ The effect of Rossetti's work was crucial, as Burne-Jones made a resolution:

"And I am to be, Heaven knows what, painter I hope, if that is possible —if not, why anything so it be not a parson. Save me from that, for I have looked behind the veil." (1.121)

Burne-Jones went to London and introduced himself to Rossetti in January 1856; soon he was his pupil and companion. By the time Burne-Jones met Rossetti, he had already experienced woman as siren. In 1854 he had written to Archibald Maclaren, "One thing that pre-

vented me writing was the heart-aches and love-troubles I have been getting into,” and to Cornel Price he wrote, “You wrote at a time when I was suffering greater mental troubles than I ever remember” (1.102). Rossetti influenced Burne-Jones’s conception of women in two ways, by his use of Burne-Jones as a model and through his story *Hand and Soul*, published in January 1850 in *The Germ*.

Rossetti first used Burne-Jones as a model in 1856, when he drew him in *Launcelot and the Lady of Shalott* for Edward Moxon’s edition of Tennyson’s *Poems* (Figure 1).¹⁴ The following year, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and other associates became involved in decorating the walls of the Oxford Union. Rossetti’s picture was *Launcelot’s Dream of the San Graal*, while Burne-Jones was to depict *Nimuë Luring Merlin*. In Rossetti’s drawing Burne-Jones as Launcelot is asleep before a shrine of angels, with the interposing figure of Guinevere, modelled by Jane Burden, later Mrs. William Morris (Figure 2). Another drawing of the same year shows Burne-Jones and Jane Burden in *Sir Launcelot in the Queen’s Chamber*. Burne-Jones was thus modelling for Launcelot while drawing Nimuë, the destructive woman.¹⁵ In 1858 Rossetti changed his role, having Burne-Jones pose for the face of Christ in *Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee* (Figure 3). This picture and *Launcelot in the Queen’s Chamber*, as John Nicoll notes, depict “sexual crisis,” with Burne-Jones the adulterous lover and the redeeming Christ.¹⁶ For Burne-Jones woman, as experienced through Rossetti, was Nimuë, Guinevere, and Magdalene. The Exeter College student and member of the Order of Sir Galahad began to change.

The counter image, of woman as epipsyche, Burne-Jones found reinforced in Rossetti’s *Hand and Soul*, a story praised by Burne-Jones in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*. In this tale of the artist Chiaro woman appears in two spiritual guises. First she is “the mystical lady . . . even she, his own gracious and holy Italian art.” Later she is the apparition of his own soul: “I am an image, Chiaro, of thine own soul within thee.”¹⁷ This was an alternative to the siren/Stunner, but its substratum was narcissistic, since the woman was a projection of the self. The narcissistic epipsyche is evident in the two stories Burne-Jones wrote for the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* in 1856, *The Cousins* and *A Story of the North*, both concerning cousins who love one another. In the former, the narrator loves his cousin Gertrude Aymas, to whom he has given a watercolor of “Dante and his vision of hell.” Rejected by her he goes to Paris and attempts suicide, only to be rescued by another cousin, Onore, whom he eventually marries. *A Story of the North* concerns Engeltram and Lady Irminhilda, lovers

who “seemed divided halves of one same life.”¹⁸ They discover they are cousins and achieve a transcendental union after death. Like *Hand and Soul* both stories treat the woman as epipsyche, with the attendant narcissistic impulse. The consanguinity of the lovers indicates that the beloved is more identical than different.

Two other contributions to the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* extend the background of Burne-Jones’s ideas about the epipsyche and the siren. The short tale *The Sacrifice*, possibly by Georgiana Macdonald, Burne-Jones’s future wife, concerns the painter Henry Radcliffe and the cruel woman he loves, Helen Musgrave:

She could not help seeing how he felt towards her; and she did see it, shamefully triumphing therein. For it pleased her selfish vanity that another should love her . . . Turning, he left her standing, looking after him, like a beautiful enchantress at a victim.¹⁹

In August, William Fulford’s *Woman, Her Duties, Education and Position*, provided the alternative image. Fulford believed “worship” of women was innate in men: “In the heart of man himself is a most powerful ally, that which has been called the woman-worshipping instinct, implanted at least in the Teutonic races.”²⁰ Burne-Jones’s stories, and these other contributions to the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, were not ancillary but crucial to his conception of women. He became engaged to Georgiana Macdonald on 9th June 1856 and married her on the same day in 1860, believing this was the date of the death of Dante’s Beatrice. Burne-Jones, however, had secured not his Beatrice but his Gemma Donati. When Burne-Jones wrote his “Essay on *The Newcomes*” for the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, he explained the main tenor of Thackeray’s novel:

And first of the central purpose of the book for which I imagine it was mainly written, reaching to the very heart and core of social disease, unhappy wedded life—the marriages that are not made in heaven, but if anywhere out of this strange world, why least of all in Heaven. Of all marvels in this same universe that pass our poor philosophy I doubt not this of marriage is the very strangest.²¹

It is difficult to find Burne-Jones being so direct about his own marriage. He commented later, “I hold it a point of honour with every gentleman to conceal himself, and make a fair show before people, to ease life for everyone” (1.102). It is certain, however, that Georgiana was neither Beatrice nor Nimuë, neither the saving soul nor the bewitching enchantress, that had formed Burne-Jones’s conception of

women during the 1850s. The roles of Dante and Launcelot would in time coalesce when the right Beatrice/Guinevere would appear.

II

Such happened in 1866, a year during which the Burne-Joneses came into contact with a new group in London, as Georgiana Burne-Jones recorded:

Another and very noticeable introduction of these days was to a part of what may be called the Greek colony in London. Before this we had had the pleasure of meeting the beautiful Miss Spartali and her sister, daughters of the Greek consul, but now, I forget in what way, we became acquainted with one or two other families of her nation. (1.303)

This notice is deliberately deceptive. The Greek colony meant the Ionides family, by the 1860s established as cotton importers in Manchester and in London. The woman who became Burne-Jones's Beatrice and Nimuë was Maria Cassavetti, granddaughter of the man who founded the mercantile family. Born in 1843, Maria had married a Parisian physician, Demetrius Zambaco, in 1861, bearing him two children in 1864 and 1865. Maria left her husband in 1866 to return to London and her mother, Euphrosyne, who took her and Marie Spartali to Burne-Jones's studio to commission a picture for Maria. Left to choose a subject, Burne-Jones selected *Cupid Finding Psyche*, from which "at least seven finished pictures" resulted.²² For Burne-Jones, the epipsyche about which he had read in *Hand and Soul* and written in *The Cousins* and *A Story of the North*, had appeared. The final page of the first volume of the *Memorials* notes:

Two things had tremendous power over him—beauty and misfortune—and far would he go to serve either; indeed his impulse to comfort those in trouble was so strong that while the trouble lasted the sufferer took precedence of every one else. (1.309)

It is significant that the *Memorials* break with a mere five pages devoted to 1867, to resume in volume two with 1868, eliding a most important year in the marriage of Georgiana and Edward Burne-Jones. Burne-Jones's affair with Maria Zambaco progressed rapidly, nearing a crisis in 1868. In the 1890s Burne-Jones wrote to Helen Mary Gaskell: "I wish I was thirty-five. Do you know I once was—isn't it strange and incredible?—but it's quite true—and stranger still I was once three and twenty!" As Mary Lago observes, the ages of twenty-three and thirty-five were turning points in his life, the first, 1856,

when he decided to become an artist; the second, 1868, when his affair with Maria had entered a crisis.²³ In 1869 there was some kind of rupture. Rossetti wrote Madox Brown:

Poor old Ned's affairs have come to a smash altogether, and he and Topsy [Morris], after the most dreadful to-do, started for Rome suddenly, leaving the Greek damsel beating up the quarters of all his friends for him and howling like Cassandra. I hear today however that Top and Ned got no further than Dover . . . Ned being now so dreadfully ill that they will probably have to return to London. Of course the dodge will be not to let a single hint of their movements become known to anybody, or the Greek (whom I believe he is really bent on cutting) will catch him again. She provided herself with laudanum for two at least, and insisted on their winding up matters in Lord Holland's Lane. Ned didn't see it, when she tried to drown herself in the water in front of Browning's house &c.—bobbies collaring Ned who was rolling with her on the stones to prevent it, and God knows what else.

David Cecil records rumors that Burne-Jones had gone to live with Maria Zambaco about this time and that the two had a suicide pact to drown themselves in the Serpentine. He cites another story that Charles Howell had brought Maria Zambaco to see Georgiana and that Burne-Jones, walking in, had collapsed, thereby revealing the affair to his wife.²⁴ Georgiana's only reference to Howell in the *Memorials* records in 1865: "And on this day of union and reunion of friends there was one who had come amongst us in friend's clothing, but inwardly he was a stranger to all that our life meant. This was Mr. Howell" (1.294). Possibly the story is true. Rossetti was distressed: "Do let me know any news of Ned and his affairs . . . P.S. How is poor Mary Z?" he asked Howell.²⁵ The year 1869 is completely ignored in the *Memorials*. If it was possible for Georgiana Burne-Jones, after the interval of decades, to efface the memory of Maria Zambaco, it was impossible for Burne-Jones himself, already cast by Rossetti as Launcelot. Reflecting his psychological state, but also that of his age, Burne-Jones proceeded to paint Maria Zambaco in roles that included Nimuë, Beatrice, and Phyllis, the woman who loved Theseus's son Demophoön. While working on some of his most successful canvases, Burne-Jones was transforming Maria under various female guises. The work of the 1870s is transitional in Burne-Jones's emotional reaction to the affair.

Of the studies of Maria Zambaco herself, several pencil sketches and one gouache portrait exist. In the pencil sketches, dating from 1870

and 1871, the wistful eyes, flowing hair, and melancholy gaze, depict both an enchantress and an epipsyche (Figures 4 and 5). The details in the gouache are of particular interest. Maria holds a book open to a reproduction of Burne-Jones's *Le Chant d'Amour*, the artist's name appears on the arrow, and Cupid draws the curtain (Figure 6). The ambiguous sexuality of *Le Chant d'Amour* noted by James and McCarthy suggests the narcissism underlying the epipsyche and the cousin/lovers of the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* stories. When Maria Zambaco was incorporated into Burne-Jones's paintings, the roles for which she became the model form an index of the artist's conception of women. Two of the most indicative appeared in 1870, the gouaches *Phyllis and Demophoön* (Figure 7) and *Beatrice* (Figure 8).²⁶ Inspired by Ovid's *Heroides* and Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, the first records the suicide of Phyllis after her abandonment by Demophoön. From the tree into which she has been transformed, she leans to embrace him on his return. If the story of Burne-Jones's suicide pact is not apochryphal, *Phyllis and Demophoön* is more autobiographical than the presence of Maria's face suggests. *Beatrice* portrays Maria as the epipsyche. In the same year Burne-Jones painted Maria, for obvious reasons, as *Summer* (Figure 9) and *Night*. The flowers in *Summer* include Forget-Me-Nots.²⁷ The eroticism of *Summer* prefigures the subsequent treatment of Maria in the decade. In 1871 she appears naked as the *Venus Epithalamia* (Figure 10), and in 1870–1873 she is depicted as one of the dancers in *The Garden of the Herperides* which, connected with the story of Jason, involves betrayal. Maria's image becomes more fearsome around 1873, when Burne-Jones did a gouache study of her as Nimuë for *The Beguiling of Merlin*. The magnificent hair has become entwined with snakes, the woman is the enchantress of the French *Romance of Merlin* (Figure 11).²⁸ The talk of the first Grosvenor Gallery exhibition in 1877, *The Beguiling of Merlin* marks the turning point in Burne-Jones' reaction to Maria Zambaco (Figure 12). The images of Phyllis and Beatrice gradually yielded to those of a more sinister character.

Corresponding to the use of Maria in paintings is the equally interesting portrayal of Georgiana. An early study, *The Rose Garden* (1862) shows a demure woman reading in a protective bower. In 1870, the same year in which Maria was Beatrice and Phyllis, Burne-Jones painted Georgiana in madonna and maternal guises. In *Winter* (Figure 13) she is not merely demure but almost cloistered, her chill virginity reflected in her encircling garments, a sharp contrast to Maria with her semi-transparent dress in *Summer*. In the 1867 *Charity* (reworked in 1870 and after 1885), Georgiana is surrounded by children, the

sanctified Victorian mother (Figure 14). In the literature of the period there is a corresponding “worship of the wife-mother” in the work of Dickens, Gaskell, and Thackeray.²⁹ Later Georgiana appeared as the beloved in *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid* of 1884, based on Tennyson. She thought “this picture contained more of Edward’s own distinctive qualities than any other that he did” (2.139), interpreting it as symbolic Socialism, a renunciation of wealth. The picture embodies the Victorian worship of virginal, majestic womanhood, as expressed in Fulford’s essay in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*. It is possible that two pictures, *The Lament* (1866) and *Love Among the Ruins* (1870–1873) record crises in the marriage of Burne-Jones. Although the model for the woman in *Love Among the Ruins* was Antonia Caiva, there is a resemblance to Maria Zambaco that may be intentional.

III

The paintings during the 1870s, from *Beatrice* to *Nimuë*, indicate the direction of Burne-Jones’s shifting response to the affair with Maria Zambaco. During the 1880s and after Burne-Jones’s paintings, along with his conversations with his studio assistant Thomas M. Rooke, reveal psychological causes for the transformation of Maria begun in the previous decade. During the period 1868–1870 Burne-Jones did the first of two important narrative sequences about *Pygmalion*, for Maria Zambaco’s mother. Inspired by his affair, Burne-Jones produced a pictorial representation of Victorian woman-worship. That this mood had changed by the 1880s is apparent from one of his most striking pictures of the decade, *The Depths of the Sea*, 1886 (Figure 15). In this painting, the only one Burne-Jones exhibited at the Royal Academy, a mermaid clasps the corpse of a sailor she had dragged into the water. A result of Burne-Jones’s visits to Italy in 1871 and 1873, the Leonardo smile of the mermaid is one of the artist’s enigmas, but whether the mermaid is ignorant of the sailor’s death, the picture represents woman as a destructive, albeit alluring force. Timothy Hilton notes:

But what are we to make of a painting like that subaqueous marvel, *The Depths of the Sea*? It is not like the sailors’ legend on which it is based; it is not really like anything else in Burne-Jones. It is not like anything, and the manic winsomeness of the mermaid’s face, as she stares straight into the spectator’s eyes, her arms round the loins of her bubbling captive, is enough to make anyone feel nervous.³⁰

The Depths of the Sea is a continuation of the deceiving woman portrayed as Nimuë in *The Beguiling of Merlin*. The face of the mermaid

resembles that of Laura Tennant, whom the Burne-Joneses called “The Siren” (2.148). Burne-Jones had begun a painting of *The Sirens* in the 1870s and was to say in 1891: “I am making a plan for a picture . . . It is a sort of Siren-land—I don’t know when or where—not Greek Sirens, but any Sirens, anywhere, that lure on men to destruction” (2.222). By a perverse coincidence Maria Zambaco was also exhibiting in 1886, so *The Depths of the Sea* hung with work by the woman who inspired it.

The alteration from worship of women to fear of women is not unexpected if one recalls that the earliest works of Burne-Jones included the evil *Sidonia von Bork* (1860), *Merlin and Nimuë* (1861), and *Morgan le Fay* (1862), all inspired by Rossetti. These fearful images were part of a deep-seated misogyny. Georgiana Burne-Jones recorded that in 1852 her brother “once applied in my hearing the dreadful-sounding name ‘Misogynist’ ” to Burne-Jones (1.66). Perceiving that the Order of Sir Galahad contained elements not of women-worship but of women-fear, she detected “half-jesting references to celibacy and misogyny” that Burne-Jones made in letters in 1853 (1.87). *The Depths of the Sea*, “an unusually sinister subject,” reveals a misogyny that had been latent since the 1850s and that was reappearing during the later decades of the artist’s life.³¹ These misogynistic attitudes were frequently expressed in conversations about marriage. He said in 1889: “It is possible, and not seldom happens, that people’s lives are quite destroyed by what they began in the hope of helping them” (2.193). Georgiana, when asked by her husband if marriage were a lottery, responded in the affirmative. Burne-Jones replied: “Then as lotteries are illegal, don’t you think it ought to be suppressed by law?” (2.193). Burne-Jones admitted to Helen Gaskell in 1894, “I seldom dream of anyone I love . . . sometimes of Georgie who is always unkind in dreams.”³² Burne-Jones felt artists should not marry:

“A painter ought not to be married; children and pictures are each too important to be both produced by one man . . . No, the great painters were not married—Michael Angelo not married, Raphael not married . . . Del Sarto married! but we know what happened to *him*.” (*B&T* 11)

In 1884, even before painting *The Depths of the Sea*, Burne-Jones had said about woman: “Once she gets the upper hand and flaunts, she’s the devil—there’s no other word for it, she’s the devil . . . as soon as you’ve taken pity on her she’s no longer to be pitied. You’re the one to be pitied then” (*B&T* 11). In 1897 Burne-Jones told Rooke: “Women



Figure 1. Rossetti, *Launcelot and the Lady of Shalott* (1856), drawing.

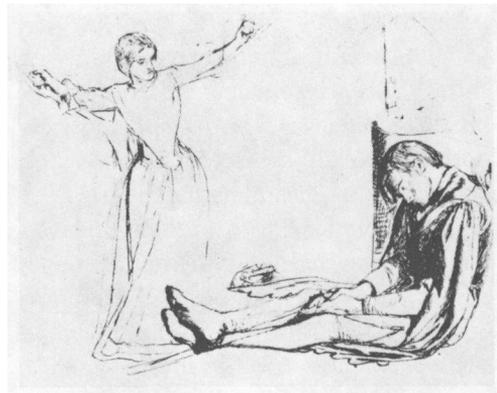


Figure 2. Rossetti, *Launcelot's Dream of the San Graal* (1857), drawing.



Figure 3. Rossetti, *Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee* (1858), drawing.



Figure 4. Burne-Jones, *Maria Zambaco* (1870), drawing.



Figure 5. Burne-Jones, *Maria Zambaco* (1871), drawing.



Figure 6. Burne-Jones, *Maria Zambaco* (1870), gouache.

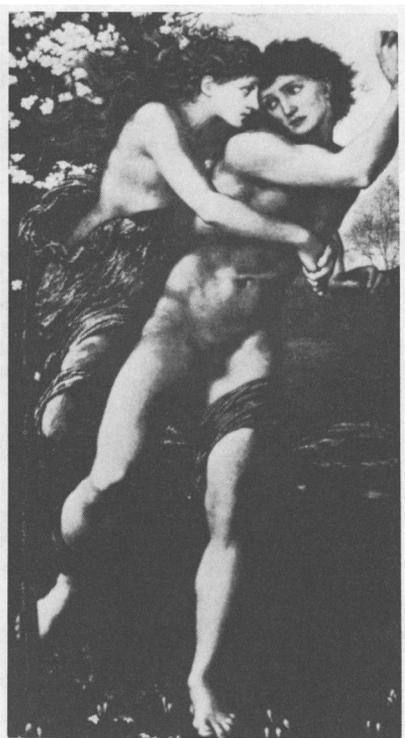


Figure 7. Burne-Jones, *Phyllis and Demophoön* (1870), gouache.



Figure 8. Burne-Jones, *Beatrice* (1870), gouache.



Figure 9. Burne-Jones, *Summer* (1870), gouache.

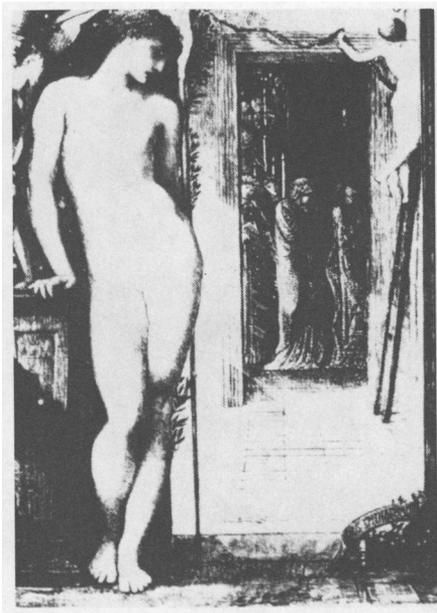


Figure 10. Burne-Jones, *Venus Epithalamia* (1871), gouache.

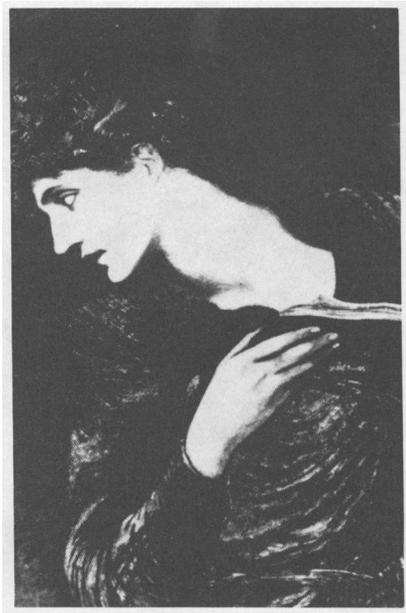


Figure 11. Burne-Jones, *Head of Nimuë* (c. 1873), gouache.



Figure 12. Burne-Jones, *The Beguiling of Merlin* (1874), oil.



Figure 13. Burne-Jones, *Winter* (1870), gouache.



Figure 14. Burne-Jones, *Charity* (1867), gouache.



Figure 15. Burne-Jones, *The Depths of the Sea* (1886), oil.



Figure 16. Burne-Jones, *Danaë and the Brazen Tower* (1888), oil.

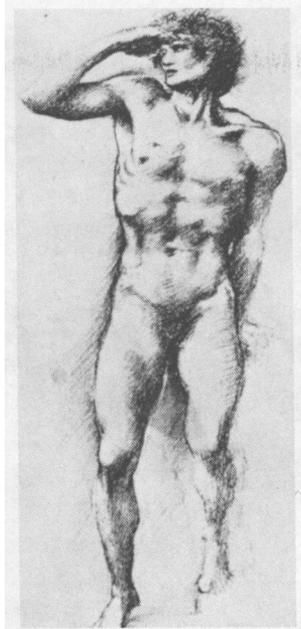


Figure 17. Burne-Jones, nude study of Perseus for *The Calling of Perseus* (c. 1876), drawing.

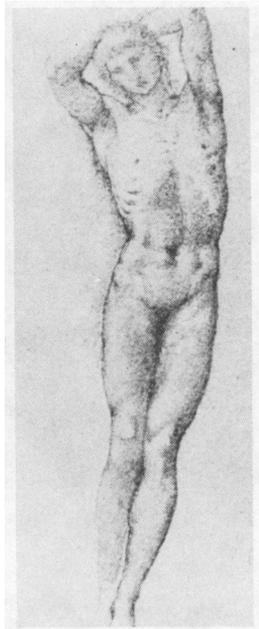


Figure 18. Burne-Jones, nude study of Chrysaor for *The Death of Medusa I* (c. 1876), drawing.



Figure 19. Burne-Jones, study for *The Doom Fulfilled* (1880s), drawing.



Figure 20. Burne-Jones, *The Birth of Chrysaor* (c. 1877), gouache.

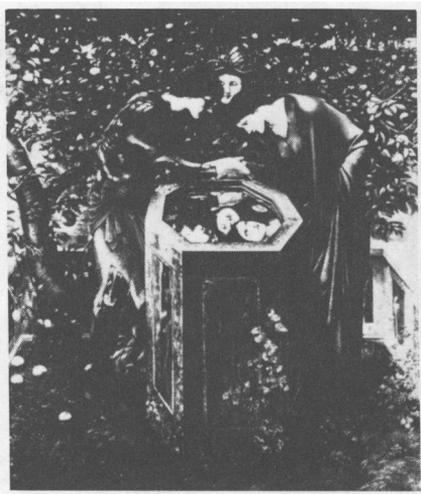


Figure 21. Burne-Jones, *The Baleful Head* (1887), oil.

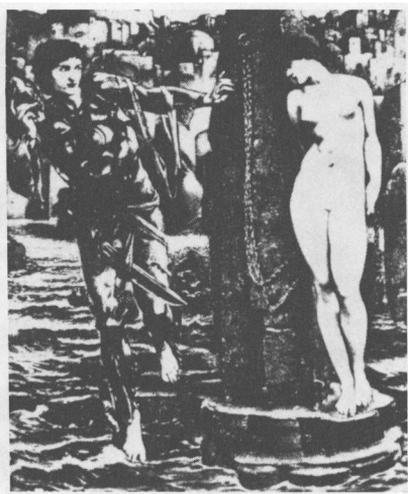


Figure 22. Burne-Jones, *The Rock of Doom* (1888), oil.

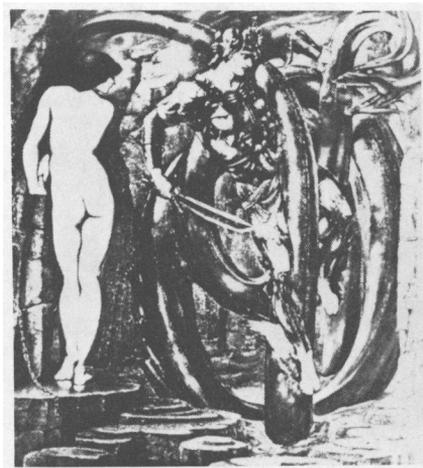


Figure 23. Burne-Jones, *The Doom Fulfilled* (1888), oil.



Figure 24. Burne-Jones, *The Wizard* (1896–1898) [unfinished], oil.

ought to be locked up. In some place where we could have access to them but that they couldn't get out from" (*BjT* 136). This final comment is a gloss on a canvas Burne-Jones completed in 1888, *Danaë and the Brazen Tower*, where the woman is indeed "locked up." It was in the legend of Danaë and her son Perseus that Burne-Jones's misogynistic fears were expressed.

With pictorial series like the *Pygmalion*, *The Briar Rose*, and the *Perseus*, Burne-Jones occupies a significant place in the tradition of Victorian narrative painting.³³ However, unlike such works as Egg's *Past and Present* (1858) and Frith's *The Road to Ruin* (1887), Burne-Jones's narrative sequences avoid contemporaneity in favor of subject from classical or medieval legends, often classical legends in medieval dress. This preference accords with his dislike of moralizing transcriptions of reality.³⁴ He noted in 1884, "Apart from portraiture . . . you only want types, symbols, suggestions" (2.140). He praised Michael Angelo because he knew "how to symbolize mystery" (2.263). These canvases are not escapist, for in them he examined his age under the guise of their myths. *Cupid and Psyche* and *Pygmalion* involve the worship of woman, while *The Briar Rose*, by not showing the Prince attaining the Sleeping Beauty, depicts fear of sexuality. *Perseus*, like these other series, is an encoded sequential narrative containing a "symbolized mystery." Commissioned in 1875 by Arthur Balfour, at Burne-Jones's death only four of the eight selected episodes were completed: *The Baleful Head* (Grosvenor 1887), *The Rock of Doom* and *The Doom Fulfilled* (New Gallery 1888), and *Perseus and the Graiae* (1892). *The Calling of Perseus*, *Perseus and the Sea Symphs*, *The Finding of Medusa*, and *The Death of Medusa* remained unfinished. Of the two central aspects of the legend, the slaying of Medusa and the rescue of Andromeda, only the Andromeda story was complete. The cycle was inspired by Morris's *The Doom of King Acrisius* from *The Earthly Paradise* (1868), and as early as 1865 Burne-Jones had drawn up a list of twenty-eight episodes for possible wood engravings.³⁵ When the two pictures were exhibited at the New Gallery, the reviewer of *The Times* noted their symbolic intention: "The action itself is conveyed in a strangely individual way; it is, if one may so express it, not so much action as the spirit of action."³⁶ The Medusa legend, as Mario Praz has observed, is significant in nineteenth-century cultural history, revealing "the discovery of Horror as a source of delight and beauty" and "the inseparability of pleasure and pain."³⁷ Burne-Jones's failure to complete the Medusa canvases would be less striking were it not that Georgiana Burne-Jones specifies that "the Medusa part of the legend,

which attracted him most, he studied deeply: the Andromeda scenes, though they came later in the story, were finished first” (2.60). Burne-Jones was aware of the pain associated with the legend. In August 1876 he had to cease work on the *Perseus* series, having been depressed for five weeks and unable to work. The association of the *Perseus* with pain reveals that the pictures are symptoms in Richard Sennett’s sense: “A symptom is a pain which does not explain itself. It requires an act of decoding. Symptoms are the language of repression.”³⁸ Repression in the *Perseus* is indicated by Burne-Jones’s determination to avoid as well as to confront the implications of the legend.

One reason for this repression is indicated by *Danaë and the Brazen Tower* (Figure 16), which was exhibited with *The Rock of Doom* and *The Doom Fulfilled* in 1888, although not part of the *Perseus* series. The work deals with Perseus’s mother as she was being imprisoned by her father, who feared her offspring would destroy him. Jupiter penetrated the tower, impregnating Danaë in a shower of gold. The pose of Danaë outside the doorway parallels that of Maria Zambaco in the *Venus Epithalamia* (Figure 10), linking that experience to the Danaë/Perseus story. The fact that sexual connection occurs through a shower of gold makes the myth a legend of prostitution. Unlike many artists before him, Burne-Jones refuses to portray this incident.³⁹ Although a partial reason for this avoidance may be originality, it is also a reaction to sexuality, recalling the parallel case of *The Briar Rose*. Burne-Jones’s reaction to Beardsley’s *The Fat Woman* (1898) is revelatory:

“The drawings were as stupid as they could be. Empty of any great quality and detestable. I was looking at some the other day, and they were more lustful than any I’ve seen . . . she looked like a mere lustful animal. Lust does frighten me, I must say. It looks like such despair—despair of any happiness and search for it in new degradation . . . I don’t know why I’ve such a dread of lust. Whether it is the fear of what might happen to me if I were to lose all fortitude and sanity and strength of mind—let myself rush down hill without any self-restraint.” (*B&T* 187–188)

The sexual fear causes Burne-Jones to “degrade” Maria by associating her with a legend involving prostitution. The fear of sexuality explains an element noted by Kurt Löcher as common through the series. While the Medusa story inherently prevents the meeting of the eyes, he notes that this avoidance appears frequently: Perseus shades his eyes at his calling by Athena; he merely glances at Andromeda on sighting her, complicating the “psychological reaction” to the canvases.⁴⁰ For Löcher the beheading of Medusa and the subsequent rescue and free-

ing of Andromeda constitute a myth of salvation similar to the stories of St. George and of the Knights in Malory.⁴¹ While this is plausible, it does not account for the fact that Burne-Jones's preliminary designs include forceful material suppressed in the final eight episodes, further signs of repression. Two dimensions of the series require emphasis: its androgynous figures and the elimination of the episode of *The Birth of Chrysaor* from the corpse of the slain Medusa (impregnated by Poseidon prior to her slaying by Perseus).

Löcher notes that in the *Perseus* "all the figures appear to be of the same sex: slender, delicate, and ageless."⁴² This androgyny is partially explained by one of Burne-Jones's earliest recollections:

"I was stabbed at school . . . the boy who did it was simply furious with me. It may have been my fault for anything I can remember—I hated each other I know . . . It was in the groin, which was in a dangerous place. It didn't hurt much, but I felt something warm from my leg and putting my hand there, I found it was blood."⁴³

In some nude studies of Perseus and Chrysaor the genitals are either obscured or eliminated (Figures 17 and 18). While this practice is conventional in sketches of the male nude, this tendency to the androgyne may indicate fear of castration based on this childhood memory. If one links this reminiscence of "danger" to Burne-Jones's fear of lust, it may be punishment in advance for sexuality, not altogether unlikely given his Evangelical background. An uncertain grasp of one's sexuality may be a further consequence. Several nude studies of *The Doom Fulfilled* show the monster cutting through the groin of Perseus to rise like a phallus (Figure 19). Although the sea-monster in Burne-Jones's canvas is of indeterminate sex, the legend specified that it was female.⁴⁴ The slaying is the killing of the threatening female, who would otherwise castrate the hero. Praz notes that the androgyne "assumed alarming proportions only in the second part of the century." This study suggests a further basis for repression: the idea of woman as phallus, and the narcissism underlying this concept, exists in the legend of Apollo and Daphne and of Phyllis and Demophoön.⁴⁵ The fear of being castrated and androgynous is compensated for by a narcissistic nullifying of the monster-female.

Burne-Jones's delay in finishing *The Death of Medusa* is further associated with his sexual identity. Although *The Death of Medusa* shows Perseus putting her head in his wallet, Burne-Jones did not depict the birth of Chrysaor and Pegasus from her corpse. This episode, however, he did sketch in the canvas now in Southampton, which shows the birth of a castrated Chrysaor from the slain Medusa

(Figure 20).⁴⁶ The pose of Chrysaor is similar to that of the drowned sailor in *The Depths of the Sea*, where the genitals are similarly eliminated, by the mermaid's arm which, like her tail, has affinity with the castrating sea-monster in *The Doom Fulfilled*. Burne-Jones did not so much avoid *The Death of Medusa* as its consequence, *The Birth of Chrysaor*. The reason can only be that it was a double record of his origin, for his mother died six days after his birth (1.10). The death of a mother at a birth may be variously interpreted by her offspring: the child may feel rejected or that he or she killed the mother. Burne-Jones's father could not bear to hold him until he was four (1.1). Burne-Jones avoided the death of Medusa because it represented his killing of his mother, but it also signifies her rejection of him, symbolically represented in the castrated Chrysaor/Burne-Jones, now powerless against the rejecting father. For someone cast as Launcelot, the "psychological rebus" Löcher finds in the *Perseus* is complex. Fear of women is the logical result of feelings of sexual inadequacy. The androgynous figures thus indicate this further example of "strong repressed sexuality" noted by Julian Hartnoll in the canvases of Burne-Jones.⁴⁷

The Andromeda section of the *Perseus* cycle reflects this same fear. The elements of the androgyne and narcissism that appear in the Medusa legend recur in the Andromeda segment. The Danaë episode, with which the Perseus story begins, contains not only a subliminal prostitution but also the idea of "rescue," an element of male fantasy appearing in the nineteenth century, for example, in Browning's *The Ring and the Book* and George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. Rescue is a component of Freud's idea of debasement of a love object. The male conceives his sexual attraction as the rescuing of a suffering woman, as Burne-Jones did Maria Zambaco, debased by her marriage because not virginal. The concept relates to the worship of woman, since it is worship of ideal womanhood that drives the man to the rescue.⁴⁸ The male must achieve dominance through rescue before sexual possession. As Launcelot and Christ, Burne-Jones was both the seducer and the rescuer. For Burne-Jones, however, the beloved object had to be transformed into another self after the rescue, a fact suggested by the androgynes in his painting. Löcher notes the prevalence of "the vertical as the governing principle of the composition" in the *Perseus* cycle. This phallic verticality, as in the pose of Nimuë in *The Beguiling of Merlin* or of Phyllis as tree in *Phyllis and Demophoön*, is significant because it is one of the signatures of Burne-Jones's work. If it is a convention, it is one in William Morris's sense: "The real point of the thing . . . is that that convention shall not be so to say, a conventional

convention. It must be a convention that you have found out for yourself in some way or another.”⁴⁹ The explanation of this verticality is given by Gérard Genette in his essay “The Narcissus Complex.” The image in the water

is precisely the vertical fall, the fall *into the depth*. The most harmless watery surface conceals an abyss. Transparent, it allows the abyss to be seen opaquely. It offers it all the more dangerously as it conceals it. To be on the surface is to dare the depth; to hesitate, is to risk shipwreck.

“The reflection is a *double* . . . at once both an *other* and the *same*.”⁵⁰

It is this narcissistic conflict of the Other and the Same that informs the final canvas of the *Perseus* cycle, *The Baleful Head*. Philip Burne-Jones recorded that his father

made a special point of finishing the last of the series . . . lest, as was unfortunately the case, he should never finish all the others, and in order that, whatever happened, the series should be intelligible as a whole and end with its proper conclusion.⁵¹

The Baleful Head was the key to the remainder (Figure 21). In contrast to the glances exchanged in the earlier canvases, in *The Baleful Head* Perseus gazes at Andromeda as she contemplates the reflection of Medusa in the fountain. Looking into the water, Andromeda sees herself as Medusa. Perseus can now look directly at Andromeda since the “rescue” is in fact the slaying of Andromeda’s separate identity to accord with the narcissist’s refusal to recognize the Other. The sexual anxiety of the Medusa legend is the immediate cause of the sexual result in the Andromeda myth. Perseus has slain Woman/Medusa (and thereby the reflected Andromeda) so he may possess not Andromeda but an epipsyche that is, as the androgyny indicates, narcissistically himself. The pose of Andromeda in *The Rock of Doom* and *The Doom Fulfilled* echoes that of Maria Zambaco in the *Venus Epithalamia* (Figures 22 and 23). Through the *Perseus* cycle Burne-Jones has slain the feared Medusa/Maria by transforming her into the androgynous, narcissistic epipsyche Andromeda/Maria. This fear of women follows the cultural direction of the nineteenth century, again as expressed by Praz:

The function of the flame which attracts and burns is exercised, in the first half of the century, by the Fatal Man (the Byronic hero), in the second half by the Fatal Woman; the moth destined for sacrifice is in the first case the woman, in the second the man . . . The obsession for the androgyne type towards the end of the century is a clear indication of a turbid confusion of function and ideal.⁵²

As Elaine Showalter notes, the female body was associated with “presumed afflictions and liabilities.”⁵³ Burne-Jones’s narcissism led to androgynous creations that neutralized this fear.

But this attempt could not be successful, for if narcissism in one of its tendencies exhibits megalomania (Perseus as power), in another it displays periodic denigrations of the self. Praz argues that “the male, who at first tends towards sadism, inclines, at the end of the century, towards masochism.”⁵⁴ With Burne-Jones this assumed the form of recurring depression. Even in 1868, during the affair with Maria Zambaco, he noted:

About every fifth day I fall into despair as usual. Yesterday it culminated and I walked about like an exposed imposter . . . At present I have evil nights and am most often awake at three, with some four hours of blank time to lie on my back and think over all my days—many and evil they seem. (2.2–3)

While painting *The Rock of Doom*, *The Doom Fulfilled*, and *Danaë* in 1887, he stated: “This last week I broke down and had to put by everything and deliver myself up to despair” (2.181). One of the worst of these states occurred during 1886 when he was finishing *The Depths of the Sea*: “nigh unto despair” (2.168). The painting with its drowning figure conjoins the feared female and the dead Narcissus. The Leonardo smile of the mermaid contained a sinister meaning, expressed by Walter Pater in *The Renaissance* when he wrote of a *Medusa* in the Uffizi that he thought was by Leonardo:

The subject has been treated in various ways; Leonardo alone cuts to its center: he alone realizes it as the head of a corpse, exercising its powers through all the circumstances of death. What may be called the fascination of corruption penetrates in every touch . . .⁵⁵

The narcissistic androgyny of the figures in the *Perseus* represents both an attempt to slay the Medusa and its futility: Burne-Jones never finished the Medusa sequence because she could not be slain. Medusa’s power does not die because it is psychological, not physical. The feared woman, whose power transcended death, could not be destroyed by transformation into an epipsyche of woman worship. The drowned Narcissus was more true than Launcelot or Chiaro.

The ultimate basis for this failure is contained in a statement made in 1893 by Burne-Jones:

“It wasn’t the multiplicity of life that I was thinking about, it was the duality, which lies further back. I suppose all these antitheses, material

and immaterial and so on, really mean ultimately just this, that consciousness itself necessarily implies a duality. There is something . . . which is conscious, and something . . . of which it is conscious . . . Only, when you have safely 'posited' . . . your microcosm and macrocosm, the one meaning you who are conscious and the other the things of which you are conscious, you have to remember that there is no real antithesis between them, sometimes not even a seeming one." (2.251–252)

Burne-Jones conceives of existence in terms of duality, but narcissism compels him to argue there is not a separation. He acknowledged the Self and the Other but had to see them as identical. This duality applied to women, as he remarked in 1897: "There are two kinds of women I like: the very good, and goldenhaired, and the exceedingly mischievous, the sirens with oat-coloured hair" (*BjT* 138). As forms of the Other they could only be dealt with by conversion into the Self as an epipsyche or as the cousin/lovers of the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* stories, where separate identity is countered by consanguinity. Androgyny exists in the paintings to avoid the feared Other, expressing a fear of women that was part of nineteenth-century culture. Burne-Jones's paintings are one expression, in a coded language, of this manifestation, for which he was the decipherer in his recollections and his conversations.

This is the meaning of Burne-Jones's portrait of himself as *The Wizard*, an unfinished canvas from 1896 to 1898. Rather than having the woman as sorcerer, he is now the magician, possibly a further sign of narcissism (Figure 24). In his lecture on the subject, Freud, speaking of the aggrandized self-image of narcissists, mentions as a trait "a technique for dealing with the external world—'magic'—which appears to be a logical application of these grandiose premises."⁵⁶ Philip Burne-Jones describes the subject of *The Wizard*: "In it a magician is depicted disclosing the vision of a shipwreck in a magic mirror to a girl who stands beside him."⁵⁷ Here the artist is the enchanter rather than the wrecked sailor of *The Depths of the Sea*. For Burne-Jones, the mythic method was the "magic," and its value is suggested by Ruskin:

We are not only to allow, but even to accept gratefully, any kind of strangeness and deliberate difference from merely realistic painting, which may raise the work, not only above vulgarity, but above incredulity.⁵⁸

In *The Beguiling of Merlin*, *The Depths of the Sea*, and the *Perseus* cycle, myth supplied the encoded mystery expressing the artist's fear of

women. Burne-Jones was neither Christ nor Launcelot, neither the rescuer nor the worshipper. These myths reflect a stratum of sensibility during the nineteenth century which is compelling since, as Joseph Campbell stresses "at the root of all [myths] as their base and final support, is the psychological."⁵⁹ In their essay "Victorian Painting and Classical Myth" Leonée and Richard Ormond note that "Any analysis of nineteenth-century classical subjects would certainly suggest that woman is a devourer, rather than a source of happiness . . . Nineteenth-century sexual fantasies have clearly affected the painter's interpretation of his subject."⁶⁰ Such is the nature of the fear expressed in the *Perseus* cycle, which may explain the fact that in 1859, when Simeon Solomon did a pencil drawing of Burne-Jones, he wrote on the back: "Ed Be Js. THE SAVAGE MINDED."⁶¹

THE UNIVERSITY OF TULSA
Graduate Faculty of English

NOTES

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1. The diversity of these images is summarized in the Introduction to Susan P. Casteras, *The Substance or the Shadow: Images of Victorian Womanhood* (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1982).
2. On nuns, see Susan P. Casteras, "Virgin Vows: The Early Victorian Artists' Portrayal of Nuns and Novices," *Victorian Studies* 24 (Winter 1981), 157-184; on Sandys and Rossetti, see Betty O'Looney Elzea, *Frederick Sandys 1829-1904* (Brighton: Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, 1974), p. 26; see Christopher Wood, *The Pre-Raphaelites* (New York: Viking, 1981), and *Olympian Dreamers* (London: Constable, 1983) on Waterhouse and others at the end of the period.
3. The mental attitudes involved in these two issues are examined in: E. M. Sigsworth and T. J. Wyke, "A Study of Victorian Prostitution and Venereal Disease," in *Suffer and Be Still*, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), pp. 77-99; and Rita McWilliams-Tullberg, "Women and Degrees at Cambridge University, 1862-1897," in *A Widening Sphere*, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), pp. 117-146. Depictions of one sphere of women's work are studied in T. J. Edelstein,

- “They Sang ‘The Song of the Shirt’: The Visual Iconology of the Seamstress,” *Victorian Studies* 23 (Winter 1980), pp. 183–210.
4. Graham Hough, *The Last Romantics* (London: Methuen, 1961), p. 191.
 5. Helene E. Roberts, “Marriage, Redundancy or Sin: The Painter’s View of Women in the First Twenty-Five Years of Victoria’s Reign,” in *Suffer and Be Still*, ed. Vicinus, p. 75.
 6. F. G. Stephens, “Edward Burne Jones, A.R.A.,” *Portfolio* 16 (November 1885), 220; see also Robin Ironside, “Burne-Jones and Gustave Moreau,” *Horizon* 1 (June 1940), 414.
 7. Henry James, “The Picture Season in London,” in *The Painter’s Eye*, ed. John L. Sweeney (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. 144, 145.
 8. Paul Leprieux, “La Légende de Persée par M. Burne-Jones,” *Gazette des beaux arts* 10 (December 1893), 462; translation mine.
 9. James, *The Painter’s Eye*, pp. 146–147; of the knight in *Le Chant d’Amour* James noted: “It must be admitted that the young warrior, with his swimming eyes, has a certain perplexing femineity of expression; but Mr. Burne-Jones does not pretend to paint very manly figures,” “The Grosvenor Gallery,” *ibid.*, pp. 163–164.
 10. Justin McCarthy, “The Pre-Raphaelites in England,” *The Galaxy* 21 (June 1876), 727.
 11. On the tradition of fearful women see Patrick Bade, *Femme Fatale: Images of Evil and Fascinating Women* (New York: Mayflower Books, 1979), *passim*.
 12. G[eorgiana] B[urne]-J[ones], *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1904), 1.99; subsequent references parenthetical to volume and page number. On Rossetti’s reaction to Burne-Jones, see 1.130; also, his letter to Charles Eliot Norton in 1862, included in *Ruskin: Rossetti: Preraphaelitism*, ed. William Michael Rossetti (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1899), p. 305.
 13. Edward Burne-Jones, “Essay on *The Newcomes*,” *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1 (January 1856), 60.
 14. A recent appraisal of the involvement of the Pre-Raphaelites in this project is Richard L. Stein, “The Pre-Raphaelite Tennyson,” *Victorian Studies* 24 (Spring 1981), 279–301.
 15. On the Oxford Union project see Penelope Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones: A Biography* (London: Michael Joseph, 1975), p. 63.
 16. John Nicoll, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (New York: Macmillan, 1975), p. 119.
 17. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Hand and Soul*, *The Germ* 1 (January 1850), 26, 30; on this story see John Dixon Hunt, *The Pre-Raphaelite Imagination, 1848–1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), p. 178. On the Pre-Raphaelite Stunners, see Violet Hunt, “‘Stunners,’” *Artwork* 6 (Summer 1930), 77–87.
 18. Burne-Jones, *The Cousins* and *A Story of the North*, included in *The Dream Weavers*, ed. John Weeks (Santa Barbara: Woodbridge Press, 1980), pp. 126, 137.
 19. *The Sacrifice*, in *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1 (May 1856), 271, 273; on the authorship see H. Buxton Forman, *The Books of William Morris* (1897; New York: Burt Franklin, 1969), p. 30.
 20. *Woman, Her Duties, Education and Position*, in *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1 (August 1856), 473; his argument anticipates that of Ruskin in *Of Queens’ Gardens* in *Sesame and Lilies* (1865).
 21. Burne-Jones, “Essay on *The Newcomes*,” p. 55.

22. Fitzgerald, p. 114; on the affair with Maria Zambaco, see pp. 112–134. The subject later was used for a frieze; see “The Cupid and Psyche Frieze by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, at No. 1 Palace Green,” *The Studio* 15 (October 1898), 3–13.
23. *Burne-Jones Talking*, ed. Mary Lago (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981), p. 11; these are his conversations with his studio assistant Thomas M. Rooke; subsequent references parenthetical to page number, preceded by *BJT*.
24. Rossetti’s letter and Cecil’s remarks in David Cecil, *Visionary and Dreamer: Samuel Palmer and Edward Burne-Jones* (London: Academy, 1977), p. 81.
25. Fitzgerald, p. 120.
26. Elizabeth Gaskell uses the name Phillis when referring to lovers who separate. In *Sylvia’s Lovers* (1863) Philip Hepburn, returning from the Siege of Acre, reads about the Earl of Warwick and his wife Phillis, separated by wars (chapter 41); in *Cousin Phillis* (1863–1864), Phillis Holman loses Edward Holdsworth.
27. Malcolm Bell, *Sir Edward Burne-Jones, A Record and Review* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1898), p. 42. Sandys did a portrait, *Forget-Me-Not* in 1887; see *Frederick Sandys*, p. 37.
28. See *Burne-Jones* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1975), nos. 129 and 130 on the head of Nimuë and *The Beguiling of Merlin*.
29. Françoise Basch, *Relative Creatures: Victorian Women in Society and the Novel* (New York: Schocken, 1974), p. 66. On this subject, also, Carol Christ, “Victorian Masculinity and the Angel in the House,” in *A Widening Sphere*, pp. 146–162. On the woman in the garden, see Casteras, *The Substance or The Shadow*, p. 20.
30. Timothy Hilton, *The Pre-Raphaelites* (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 201; on the idea of drowning and fear of women, see Bade, p. 14, and Casteras, *The Substance or The Shadow*, p. 43.
31. William Waters, *Burne-Jones* (Aylesbury: Shire, 1973), p. 38.
32. Fitzgerald, p. 252. For fictional women, Burne-Jones could feel much compassion; see references to *Anna Karenina* and *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* in *Memorials* 2.163–164.
33. On the subject matter of Victorian narrative painting, see the following: Raymond Lister, *Victorian Narrative Paintings* (New York: Potter 1966); E. D. H. Johnson, “Victorian Artists and the Urban Milieu,” in *The Victorian City*, ed. H. J. Dyos and Michael Wolff (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 2.449–474; and the catalogue *Victorian Social Conscience* by Renée Free (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1976).
34. J. Comyns Carr, *Coasting Bohemia* (London: Macmillan, 1914), p. 61, notes that “unprejudiced inspection of the facts of nature . . . he had not the will, he had not the power to make.”
35. This list is included in Kurt Löcher’s very important *Der Perseus-Zyklus von Edward Burne-Jones* (Stuttgart: Staatsgalerie, 1973), p. 48; subsequent translations from this book are mine. Maurice Berger discusses Maria Zambaco and Medusa/Andromeda in “Edward Burne-Jones’ ‘Perseus-Cycle’: The Vulnerable Medusa,” *Arts Magazine* 54 (April 1980), 149–153. Berger’s essay predates *Burne-Jones Talking*, and he evades the question of androgyny (p. 150) as well as the concepts of rescue and narcissism. The face of Andromeda in *The Rock of Doom*, which he contends is Maria’s (p. 152), is rather that of Laura Tenant (*The Depths of the Sea*) if of anyone. Maria’s profile in a canvas is best

- seen in *Night*. On the Perseus legend see Jocelyn M. Woodward, *Perseus: A Study in Greek Art and Legend* (Cambridge: University Press, 1937).
36. *The Times*, 9th May 1888, p. 10.
 37. Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, translated by Angus Davidson (1933; New York: World, 1956), pp. 27, 28; particularly important to this study are chapter one "The Beauty of the Medusa" and chapter four "La Belle Dame sans Merci." See also Casteras, *The Substance or the Shadow*, pp. 42–45 and, p. 94, her comments on Sandys' *Medusa* (c. 1875); also the essay by Martha Kingsbury, "The Femme Fatale and Her Sisters," in *Woman as Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art, Art News Annual* (New York, 1972), pp. 182–205; also Bade, *passim*.
 38. Richard Sennett, "Narcissism and Modern Culture," *October* 4 (Fall 1977), 76.
 39. On the prostitute in art see Casteras, *The Substance or the Shadow*, pp. 36–38; Sandys also did a *Danaë in the Brazen Chamber* in 1867; see *Frederick Sandys*, p. 36.
 40. Löcher, p. 12.
 41. The St. George story has received recent study in Paul L. Sawyer, "Ruskin and St. George: The Dragon-Killing Myth in 'Fors Clavigera,'" *Victorian Studies* 23 (Autumn 1979), 5–28.
 42. Löcher, p. 12.
 43. Martin Harrison and Bill Waters, *Burne-Jones* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1977), p. 3; on Maria Zambaco see pp. 96–99; on *Perseus*, p. 120.
 44. Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1955), 1.240.
 45. Norman O. Brown, "Daphne, or Metamorphosis," in *Myths, Dreams, and Religion*, ed. Joseph Campbell (New York: Dutton, 1970), pp. 91–110; Mario Praz, p. 175.
 46. I am grateful to Mrs. Christine Bayliss of the Fulham Public Library for showing me their *Chrysaor*; see the catalogue *Sir Edward Burne-Jones* (London: Borough of Hammersmith, 1967), no. 25.
 47. Löcher, p. 19; Julian Hartnoll, "Introduction" to *Burne-Jones et l'influence des Preraphaelites* (London: Hartnoll and Eyre, 1972), p. 16.
 48. The idea of "rescue" is particularly strong in Millais because of his attraction to Effie Ruskin and appears in *The Order or Release, 1746* (1853), *The Rescue* (1855), *Escape of a Heretic* (1857), and *The Ransom* (1862). See the catalogue by Mary Bennett, *PRB/Millais/PRA* for the 1967 Liverpool exhibition, nos. 38, 61.
 49. William Morris, "The English Pre-Raphaelites," in May Morris, *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist* (1936; New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), 1.301.
 50. Gérard Genette, "Complexe de Narcisse," *Figures I* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), pp. 24, 21; translations mine. The narcissism of the *Perseus* is evident since in the first panel, *The Calling of Perseus*, Athena gives him the mirror in which to see Medusa. The series concludes with another narcissistic image, the fountain, in *The Baleful Head*. Beardsley was to use the figure before the mirror frequently, as in the cover for the third volume of *The Yellow Book*.
 51. Philip Burne-Jones, "Notes on Some Unfinished Works of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Bt.," *Magazine of Art* 23 (1900), 162.
 52. Mario Praz, p. 206.
 53. Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 76.

54. Mario Praz, p. 206.
55. Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (Chicago: Academy, 1977), p. 106.
56. Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–1974), 14.75.
57. Philip Burne-Jones, p. 161.
58. John Ruskin, "Mythic Schools of Painting," *The Works of Ruskin* (London: Allen, 1903–1912), 14.281.
59. Joseph Campbell, "Mythological Themes in Creative Literature and Art," in *Myths, Dreams, and Religion*, p. 141.
60. Leonée and Richard Ormond, "Victorian Painting and Classical Myth," in *Victorian High Renaissance* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1978), p. 34. They note the prevalence of the Perseus myth in other artists, e.g., Leighton and the sculptor Alfred Gilbert, during the last two decades of the century, p. 38.
61. See Kenneth Clark, *Ruskin and His Circle* (London: Arts Council, 1964), no. 254. In *Woman and the Demon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), Nina Auerbach discusses several images, e.g. mermaids, relevant to Burne-Jones's "savagery."

The reproductions used in this essay are from the following sources; the most recent provenance is included in parentheses:

The Pre-Raphaelite Era 1848–1914 [exhibition catalogue]. Wilmington: Wilmington Society of Fine Arts, 1976: *Figure 1* (plate 2–10, Delaware Art Museum).

John Nicoll, *Rossetti*. New York: Macmillan, 1975: *Figure 2* (plate 60, City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham).

Marina Henderson, *D. G. Rossetti*. London: Academy Editions, 1973: *Figure 3* (p. 21, Fitzwilliam Museum).

Penelope Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones: A Biography*. London: Michael Joseph, 1975: *Figure 4* (p. 48, British Museum).

Burne-Jones [exhibition catalogue]. London: Arts Council, 1975: *Figure 5* (plate 116, Mrs. George Chrystie); *Figure 9* (plate 110, Michael Hasenclever, Munich); *Figure 11* (plate 130, Delaware Art Museum); *Figure 12* (plate 129, Lady Lever Art Gallery); *Figure 13* (plate 112, Michael Hasenclever, Munich); *Figure 15* (plate 155, private collection); *Figure 16* (plate 117, Glasgow Art Gallery).

Martin Harrison and Bill Waters, *Burne-Jones*. London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1973: *Figure 6* (plate 134, private collection); *Figure 7* (plate 137, City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham); *Figure 8* (plate 135, private collection); *Figure 10* (plate 133, Fogg Art Museum).

Malcolm Bell, *Sir Edward Burne-Jones*. London: Newnes, 1907: *Figure 14* (plate 24, Michael Hasenclever, Munich); *Figure 24* (plate 45, City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham).

Kurt Löcher, *Der Perseus-Zyklus von Edward Burne-Jones*. Stuttgart: Staatsgalerie, 1973: *Figure 17* (plate 29, David Daniels Collection); *Figure 18* (plate 68, Victoria and Albert Museum); *Figure 19* (plate 100, Fitzwilliam Museum); *Figure 20* (plate 66, Southampton Art Gallery); *Figure 21* (plate 14, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart); *Figure 22* (plate 12, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart); *Figure 23* (plate 13, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart).